



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Proposal for Bycatch Reduction for the Shrimp Fishery in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announces the availability of Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico that has been submitted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC). The amendment would establish a requirement for the use of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in the eastern Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery; establish a criterion whereby BRDs would be certified for use in this regional fishery; and establish bycatch reporting requirements for the shrimp fishery throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

The intended effect of Amendment 10 is to conserve stocks of finfish species found in the bycatch, while sustaining the viability of the shrimp fishery with a minimum of economic and social impacts. Written comments on the proposed actions are requested from the public by **October 14, 2003**.

Background

Amendment 9 to the FMP, implemented in 1998, addressed bycatch reduction requirements for the shrimp fishery in areas west of Cape San Blas, Florida (western Gulf of Mexico). The GMFMC has developed Amendment 10 as a complementary action to Amendment 9. This action would further address the GMFMC's responsibilities to meet requirements in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to reduce bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery to the extent practicable.

Amendment 10, if implemented, would establish a requirement for shrimp vessels fishing in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) east of 85°30' West

Longitude (approximately east of Cape San Blas, Florida) to use BRDs capable of reducing at least 30 percent of the total weight of the finfish catch. BRDs currently certified for other areas of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic region, including Florida territorial waters, would meet this requirement.

Amendment 10 also would establish a method of reporting and estimating the bycatch in the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico by using data collected by an existing fishery independent survey, the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP), combined with NOAA Fisheries' best available estimates of shrimp fishing effort.

Comments received by **October 14, 2003**, will be considered in NOAA Fisheries' decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. Comments received after that date will not be considered. A proposed rule that would implement measures outlined in Amendment 10 will be published soon for public review and comment. All comments received on the amendment or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be addressed in the final rule. Written comments must be mailed to:

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Comments may also be sent via fax to 727-570-5583. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

Requests for copies of the amendment, which includes an Environmental Assessment, an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, and a Regulatory Impact Review, should be sent to:

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
3018 U.S. Highway North, Suite 1000
Tampa, FL, 33619-2266
telephone: 813-228-2815; fax: 813-225-7015
e-mail: gulfcouncil@noaa.gov

To obtain considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available, leave a message, and we will return your call. This and other news releases are available on the Southeast Regional Office homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Department of Commerce.